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Creating a web site for private practice: The future of advertising

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Abstract

Creating a web site for private practice: The future of advertising

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Creating a Web Site for Private Practice: The Future of Advertising.

Todd Anthony Noble B.S.

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the College of Optometry
Pacific University
Forest Grove, Oregon
For the degree of Doctor of Optometry
May 2000

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Robert L. Yolton, O.D., Ph.D.

Creating a Web Site for Private Practice: The Future of Advertising.

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Robert L. Yolton, O.D., Ph.D.

Robert L. Yolton

PROJECT RELEVANCE:

The future of advertising may lie within the internet. With the expanding role the internet plays in people's daily lives, it is only a matter of time before people turn to the internet as their primary method of accessing information. Already, thousands and thousands of people are using the World Wide Web for various sources of research. Children are being taught how to use the internet in schools; teachers are attending seminars, taking continuing education, and fulfilling state requirements of the internet.

Companies have picked up on this increased emphasis on the internet and have begun vast advertising campaigns on the World Wide Web. In addition, the public is expanding its usage of the internet due to the ease of information acquisition. In fact, many people use the internet to find addresses or phone numbers. If this trend continues, it is only a small amount of time before a large segment of the public is also using the internet as a form of yellow pages. Many businesses are distributing their web site addresses in as many places as possible. Optometrists must keep up with this new advertising trend, but in order to do that, they will need to know how to develop and display their own web pages. This project provides an example for practicing optometrists to follow as a format to develop their own web site.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN:

A web page was designed for a private practice in a small community of under 10,000 people. The size of the community helped to determine the areas of emphasis placed in the page and the specific flavor given to the web page. Prospective patients, current patients and competitors were all considered as the target audience when creating the web site. To make the site easy to browse through, a flow chart type pattern was created with common links from page to page.

The first page a web site visitor encounters is the home page. From here, the visitor can choose one of three different routes to explore. In order to make the web site navigation as easy as possible, the three routes were divided into "new patient", "existing patient", and "other health care professional". Depending on the route chosen, the visitor comes to a variety of different links.

The new patient first arrives at an introductory welcome page where he or she can see a picture of the doctor and each one of the staff members, as well as read a little about each one of them. From here the new patient can choose a variety of different paths: services offered, products offered, frequently asked questions, what is included in a vision

exam and what to bring to the exam, a map to the office, a pre-exam form, and a page to schedule an exam or include comments about the web site.

An existing patient arrives at similar sites but has a more narrow selection of choices in order to spare them from seeing things they already know. This patient first arrives at the "what is included in a vision exam page." From there, the existing patient can select from the following pages: products offered, frequently asked questions, a pre-exam form, and a page to schedule an exam or include comments about the web site.

Finally, other health care professionals can navigate a site that talks about Dr. Noble's specialties. From there, they can go to a services offered site or to a map to the office.

In order to test the effectiveness of this particular web site, informal surveys were utilized. During the mid-phase of the web page project, 15 people were asked to give their opinions on how easily the site was to navigate and their impressions on the overall appeal of the web site. The people surveyed ranged from first time internet users to avid internet surfers. Each comment was considered seriously and every effort was made to improve the site so the final product appealed to the majority of the people.

FUTURE USE:

The experience of creating this web page has been very helpful in my knowledge of developing and understanding web page design. I plan to one day use this web page prototype as a template to design my own private practice web site.

CONCLUSION:

In order to survive, every optometrist must have an adequate supply of patients. The methods used to acquire and keep these patients can be almost as important as the clinical care delivered by the doctor. Increasingly, patients will surf the Web to find the health care services they need, and the successful optometrist must have an attractive and professional Web site.